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DE RUEHIN #0785/01 1800939  
ZNR UUUUU ZZH  
R 290939Z JUN 09  
FM AIT TAIPEI  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 1857  
INFO RUEHB/AMEMBASSY BEIJING 9268  
RUEHHK/AMCONSUL HONG KONG 0702

UNCLAS AIT TAIPEI 000785

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DEPARTMENT FOR INR/R/MR, EAP/TC, EAP/P, EAP/PD - NIDA EMMONS  
DEPARTMENT PASS AIT/WASHINGTON

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: OPRC KMDR KPAO TW

SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION: U.S. BEEF, U.S.-TAIWAN RELATIONS

¶1. Summary: Taiwan's major Chinese-language dailies focused their June 27-29 news coverage on the sudden death of Michael Jackson last Thursday; on the arrest of Honduran President Manuel Zelaya by the Honduran military Sunday and its impact on President Ma Ying-jeou's upcoming trip to Central America; and on AIT Director Stephen Young's press conference Friday, in which he talked about Taiwan's plan to open its market to U.S. beef. The pro-independence "Liberty Times" front-paged a banner headline June 27, reading "U.S. Beef Will Be Fully Imported [to Taiwan] at the End of June at the Latest."

¶2. In terms of editorials and commentaries, a column in the mass-circulation "Apple Daily" discussed the import of U.S. beef and urged the Taiwan authority not to ease its import criteria in exchange for President Ma's transit stops in the States. An editorial in the pro-unification "United Evening News" also said that U.S. beef is not merely an issue concerning the Taiwan people's livelihood; rather, the article said, it is related to the public's mentality of "the government safeguarding its citizens' interests." The article concluded by saying the public will not support it if the Taiwan government bows to U.S. trade pressure and fully open its market to U.S. beef. An editorial in the pro-independence, English-language "Taipei Times," however, argued that "there is no valid reason for the Taiwanese government to extend its ban on U.S. beef" and that "senseless bans on U.S. products do nothing to help Taiwan-U.S. ties." With regard to U.S.-Taiwan relations, an "Apple Daily" op-ed discussed Taiwan's foreign relations with other countries under the Ma administration. The article cited AIT Director Young's description of U.S.-Taiwan relations using Bob Dylan's song "Blowing in the Wind" as saying that Taiwan's is facing a crisis of diplomatic collapse. An editorial in the pro-independence, English-language "Taiwan News" said that "simply because the Ma administration is avoiding causing short-term difficulties for Washington does not mean that the Ma administration's China-centric tilt will not bring unwelcome 'surprises' for long-term and fundamental American political and security interests. ...." End summary.

¶3. U.S. Beef

A) "Beef That [We] Don't Want to Eat"

The "Spicy Apple" column in the mass-circulation "Apple Daily" [circulation: 520,000] wrote (6/27):

"[AIT Director] Stephen Young, who is about step down from his position, said in his last press conference before departing Taiwan for the United States that Taiwan's full opening of its market to U.S. beef 'is very close to success.' Despite the Department of Health's denial afterwards that [the issue] has been settled, it is worrisome to see whether Taiwan officials will be able to resist the United States' open imposition of pressure [on Taiwan]. The United States often takes advantage of its superiority as a world superpower to promote its various products with great strength. Taiwan relies deeply on the United States, no matter whether it is in the field of national defense, foreign relations or economics.

The Big Boss United States' constant pressure must have been a headache for the [previous Chen Shui-] Bian administration and must be so for the Ma administration.

"But given the fear of mad cow disease, the government should stand firm by its criteria and not randomly ease its import standards no matter how tasty U.S. beef is. This is the minimum request of the public for food safety. ... Ma Ying-jeou is about to transit the United States again, but he should not let go [of Taiwan's food control] easily just to 'return the favors' [of the United States]. One cannot afford to make such a 'joke!'"

B) "U.S. Beef Must Be Safe and Worry-free for the People to Eat"

The pro-unification "United Evening News" [circulation: 50,000] editorialized (6/27):

"... Pro-U.S. [South Korean] President Lee Myung-bak carelessly agreed to import U.S. bone-in beef for the sake of a Washington-Seoul Free Trade Agreement and thus triggered huge chaos merely three months after he took office. Similarly, Taiwan's public opinion will not easily let [the U.S. beef issue] pass, because it will indicate the collapse of two lines of defense: Namely, the failure to safeguard the health safety of [Taiwan's] citizens if [Taiwan] imports bone-in beef from areas infected with mad cow disease, its people will be exposed to the risk of contracting this disease. What's more serious is the yielding of [Taiwan's] sovereignty, which will indicate that the [Taiwan] government is incapable of resisting U.S. pressure and is making concessions.

"In other words, U.S. beef is not simply an issue concerning people's livelihood; it is related to the public's mentality of 'the government safeguarding its citizens' interests.' The Ma administration [always] boasts that current Taiwan-U.S. relations are greatly improved over what they were previously. But if it bows to U.S. trade pressure, then such 'diplomatic friendliness' at the expense of the citizens' interests will not be supported by the public. U.S. beef may be tasty, but the government must act in accordance with scientific data and ensure that the public can eat [U.S. beef] safely and worry-free."

C) "Unlikely Victims of a Beef Beat-up"

The pro-independence, English-language "Taipei Times" [circulation: 30,000] editorialized (6/27):

"If there is one thing that can drag the director of the American Institute in Taiwan (AIT) out of his Xinyi Road office and into the media spotlight, it is this: stumping for the US beef industry. In recent years this has become a more pressing task, because for some years the Taiwanese government has had a ban in place on certain categories of US beef after isolated reports of mad cow disease emerged in the US. The beef industry in the US is big business, so big in fact that Congress is willing to fork out indecently large amounts of taxpayer dollars to subsidize an industry with more political clout than economic merit. Those who aren't US beef farmers or politicians indebted to the beef lobby have little sympathy for an industry that has come to represent a lot of what is wrong with selective government assistance in the face of environmental degradation.

"That said, there is no valid reason for the Taiwanese government to extend its ban on US beef. AIT Director Stephen Young was absolutely correct yesterday when he urged the government -- and by extension, the Taiwanese consumer -- to 'focus on the science and not the politics.' The hesitancy of the government to lift the ban poses an intriguing problem: What does it have to fear when its own health authorities admit that the risk of contracting mad cow disease is extremely remote? ...

"Political anxiety over US beef imports cannot be separated from the extraordinary displays of anger in South Korea against US beef, and the government possibly thinks it is easier to neutralize the hobby-horse of a few unctuous Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) politicians by closing down the debate rather than giving beef importers their due. The problem for the DPP is that the beef

debate is only wounding the party as it strives for greater credibility among voters. ... Whatever the merits of the US beef industry, senseless bans on US products do nothing to help Taiwan-US ties. But opportunist attacks from a political party struggling to regain electoral credibility are more noteworthy: There is nothing to gain for the DPP by nailing its colors to the mast on such a ridiculous issue - and, once again, encouraging skeptics to argue that the party is too parochial, mischievous and inept to be entrusted with a popular mandate."

#### 14. U.S.-Taiwan Relations

##### A) "Taiwan-U.S. Relations 'Gone with the Wind'"

Lai I-chung, assistant professor at the Mackay Medicine, Nursing & Management College, opined in the mass-circulation "Apple Daily" [circulation: 520,000] (6/29):

"The crisis over mutual trust between Taiwan and Japan caused by Ma Ying-jeou's new interpretation of the [1952] 'Sino-Japanese Peace Treaty' has yet to be resolved, and now there are reports saying that the Honduras ambassador to Taiwan was complaining about Taipei failing to fulfill its cooperation commitment [with Honduras]. Ma will travel to Central America twice in a month, including Panama, which is listed as one of China's allies on the website of China's Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Plus AIT Taipei Director Stephen Young, upon his departure, described Taiwan-U.S. relations with a well-known song by folk song singer Bob Dylan -- 'Blowing in the Wind.' We can discover that over the past one year, Ma's 'modus vivendi' has totally exhausted Taiwan's remaining assets in the international community, and Taiwan is facing a crisis of diplomatic collapse. ...

"We have discovered that in less than a year since Ma took office, he has ended up making our allies suspect Taiwan's sincerity in maintaining diplomatic ties, and there was this crisis over mutual trust between Taiwan and Japan, which has no diplomatic ties with Taiwan. Now Taiwan's relations with the United States have been described by Young as 'gone with the wind.' All these have nothing to do with China's suppression; instead, they were brought about by the Ma administration's own doing. Taiwan's diplomatic collapse is something that [First Lady] Christine Chou's drumming cannot save!"

[Ed. The author of this piece has conflated Bob Dylan's "Blowing in the Wind," cited in this op-ed in English, with "Gone with the Wind." The Chinese term for the epic Civil War movie is used

elsewhere in the article.]

##### B) "Obama Should Cherish Taiwan Democracy"

The pro-independence, English-language "Taiwan News" [circulation: 20,000] editorialized (6/29):

"... For nearly six months, the new Obama administration has adopted a conciliatory and multilateral diplomacy-oriented approach to handle world affairs that has contrasted starkly with the narrow-minded "America first" unilateralism of the former right-wing Republican George W. Bush administration, as shown by his moving appeal for dialogue with the Muslim world delivered in Cairo June 4.

In regard to the Taiwan Strait, the Obama administration has initially focused on encouraging peace and stability and has applauded the resumption of talks between the Chinese Communist Party-ruled People's Republic of China and Taiwan, now under the restored Chinese Nationalist Party (Kuomintang) administration of President Ma Ying-jeou.

All responsible leaders, parties or political interests in Taiwan welcome reduced tensions in the Taiwan Strait, but most official and informal representatives of the Obama administration have unfortunately failed to perceive the underlying turbulent currents stirred up by what is essentially a rapprochement between an authoritarian regime and an "one party dominant" government at the expense of Taiwan's democracy, substantive independence and even the economic and social welfare of the majority of its people. ...

"Despite the long-commitment of the Democratic Party to grassroots democratic values and human rights in Asia including Taiwan, so far the Obama administration has said nothing about these worrisome trends. Nevertheless, American citizens concerned with Taiwan and

Asian democracy have acted with alarm. In the case of the overt engineering of the Taiwan Foundation of Democracy reshuffle by Ma's National Security Council Secretary-General Su Chi, U.S. Congressman Robert Andrews urged Obama to express Washington's concerns toward Ma's sacrifice of Taiwan's democracy for closer relations with China, while the president of the National Endowment for Democracy wrote to Ma to convey the NED's anxiety that the changes would downplay the TFD's mission to help promote democratic change and the protection of human rights. Continued silence by the Obama administration may encourage Ma and his one-party dominant KMT administration to take advantage of Washington's pleasure with eased tensions in the Taiwan Strait to carry out further undemocratic policies or actions with impunity.

"Even though the U.S. needs the PRC's cooperation on numerous hot issues, Washington also still must strike a balance between engaging and hedging a rising authoritarian China from rolling back democratic and free governance in the rest of Asia and the maintenance of a vibrant democracy in Taiwan is essential for this mission. Obama should keep in mind that simply because the Ma administration avoids causing short-term difficulties for Washington does not mean that its China-centric tilt will not bring unwelcome "surprises" for long-term and fundamental American political and security interests, not the least of which will be greater tension and growing lack of trust between Taipei and Tokyo. We remain confident that the majority of Taiwan people will do their best to safeguard their own democratic rights, but we are less and less convinced that the Ma government will truly respect Taiwan's democratic 'game rules.' Therefore, we urge the Obama administration to solemnly affirm that democracy and human rights in Taiwan, as well as in China itself, are an important American and global interest and thereby help ensure that calm in the Taiwan Strait does not sacrifice the world's first Sinitic democracy."

YOUNG